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AUTHOR Ely, Donald P.
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ABSTRACT

Because no published glossary of audiovisual terms has yet gained international currency, there is a need to: (1) explore international acceptance of a list of audiovisual terms and definitions; (2) review current efforts to do so; (3) propose criteria for acceptable terms and definitions; and (4) recommend procedures for acceptance of terminology. Consistency of definition is necessary to maintain meaningful discourse between producers, librarians, practitioners, and administrators. The goal of providing accuracy and clarity is especially important in a field characterized by prolific growth and diversity of formats. For example, the videocassette is presently available in some 20 forms, and the use of the term no longer suggests specific information about size or system compatibility. Efforts to develop uniform taxonomies are under way in Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the United States; and the International Council of Educational Media is also developing terminology; but work remains in the development of a list which is exhaustive, mutually exclusive, unambiguous, and amendable to translation. (EMH)

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The Current Status of Audiovisual Definitions and Terminology: An International Perspective [1]

Donald P. Ely [2]

"If the Prince of Wei were to ask you to take over the government, what would you put first on your agenda?"

"The one thing needed," replied the Master, "is the definition of terms. If terms are ill-defined, statements disagree with facts; when statements disagree with facts, business is mismanaged; when business is mismanaged, order and harmony do not flourish; when order and harmony do not flourish, then justice becomes arbitrary; and when justice becomes arbitrary, the people do not know how to move hand or foot."

- Confucius

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At the present time there is no internationally accepted glossary of terms and definitions relating to audiovisual media. Organizations and individual authors from several countries have developed and published glossaries of audiovisual terms [3] but no definitions have gained official approval by any international body. The purpose of this paper is (1) to explore the need for an internationally accepted list of audiovisual terms and definitions; (2) to review the current efforts; (3) to propose criteria for the terms and definitions; and (4) to recommend procedures for gaining acceptance.

We should begin our exploration by asking, "Is a glossary of audiovisual terms and definitions necessary?" "If so, by whom and for what purposes?" We begin by considering potential users rather than with a

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1 Prepared for the International Symposium on Audio-Visual Materials, sponsored by the International Standards Organization, Strasbourg, France, 9 January 1976.

2 Director, Center for the Study of Information and Education, and Professor of Education (Instructional Technology) Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York, U.S.A.

3 The bibliography contains references to these glossaries.

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glossary as an end in itself.

The users of a glossary are those who are involved in any aspect of a field. In the sciences (and other disciplines) an agreed-upon list of terms and definitions is necessary to permit a universe of discourse. The ideal discipline is the one in which all members understand perfectly the terms and definitions related to that discipline. This agreement on language is the sine qua non for communication and is learned by all persons who enter the discipline since it is the basic tool for all future discourse. Definitions in the fixed disciplines (mathematics, biology and psychology, for example) are much easier than in applied fields (engineering, medicine and education, for example) because the applied fields usually draw upon several disciplines and must perform in a more practical and complex setting than the laboratory or the theory-prone university environment. Applied fields are also subject to rapid changes as new knowledge and inventions appear which directly affect practice.

The fields which use audiovisual terminology are applied fields - library, educational technology and to a lesser degree, information science. Users of audiovisual terminology fall into four categories; (1) producers of materials and manufacturers of equipment; (2) librarians who classify and catalog materials; (3) practitioners who use materials and equipment; and (4) administrators who need data about materials and equipment for the purpose of decision-making. Terminology must be consistent for all categories of users.

1. Producers of materials and manufacturers of equipment depend upon terms and definitions to guide their efforts. Definitions which are accepted become standards which insure that products are consistent from place to place.

2. Librarians need definitions to assist in the process of classifying and cataloging nonbook materials. Definitions help to identify each item so that it may be properly catalogued and easily located by the user. Definitions also help to identify items for the purpose of gathering statistics.

3. Practitioners use definitions to help identify materials which are needed for personal use or for teaching. Definitions help to identify a class of materials from which specific selections can be made.

4. Administrators need to know how many items of each type are in a collection and how often they are used. Consistent definitions permit accurate data gathering and assist in comparisons from situation to situation.

With these users in mind it is clear that terms and definitions must be developed which are accurate, clear and comprehensive. Definitions must be consistent for all users, otherwise confusion will develop and the potential for international cooperation will be reduced.

The Need for International Standardization of Terms and Definitions

The definition of audiovisual terms must be consistent for all users even though the purpose for using the terms may differ. A producer may wish to create a sequence of projected pictures with sound accompaniment. Once a medium is selected, the definition insures that the format is consistent with other formats of the same type. The librarian may need to establish a classification and cataloging scheme for the growing number of nonprint items in the collection. The terms and definitions should provide sufficient information for classification.

The practitioner often requests information by format. For example, "Do you have a filmstrip about Peru?" Both the librarian and the user usually share a common definition. But if the librarian indicates that there is no filmstrip on the topic but that there is a kit, a problem of definition might arise. The administrator of an academic institution such as a school or college needs to know the size of the nonprint collection in the media center and how often it is being used so that budget money can be allocated based on needs. A comparison with the use patterns in other institutions is also desired. With accepted definitions, accurate and reliable data can be gathered and presented.

The rapid growth of communication media has brought about a proliferation of audiovisual formats. Some come and go rapidly; others are introduced and become adopted rapidly; and others go through an evolutionary period. The task of those who define audiovisual terms is to identify terms in common usage and to define them after an analysis of usage. It is not the task of the definition maker to coin new terms or to provide additional meaning to definitions. As with lexicographers, "... the three cardinal virtues of dictionary making (are) accuracy, clearness and comprehensiveness."[4] Definitions of audiovisual terminology are accurate reflections of currently accepted usage and should be stated clearly so that there is no ambiguity.

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4 Philip B. Gove, Preface to Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Springfield, Mass.: G. & C. Merriam Co., 1966, p. 6a.

As producers and manufacturers in many nations develop new products we need to be aware of changes in format so that definitions can reflect changes which have become accepted by a large portion of users. The introduction of the videocassette about five years ago is an example of rapid acceptance and has given cause to creating a new definition of videotape to include videocassette. The problem is compounded, however, when there are several different sizes and formats for the videocassette as there are for videotape itself. For those who are concerned about definitions, the problem is to accurately describe the characteristics of each medium and its variations. It is not to create standardization and reduction of formats (as important as that may be).

The task of definition making for audiovisual media is at once simple and complex. Simple because there are about twenty formats which need to be defined. Even though there is no internationally accepted agreement on terms and definitions, there is consensus on most of the items. For example, there is virtually no disagreement regarding what constitutes a motion picture, a filmstrip, a slide or an audiocassette recording, although the names used for identification are not always agreed upon. There may be minor disagreements on such terms as game, kit, map and model but these can be rectified. Fortunately, producers and manufacturers from country to country have accepted the notion of standardization as good business practice and this helps those who write definitions.

How specific do definitions need to be in order to identify useful items? There is an unmet need to define audiovisual materials at the broader (or generic) level as well as at the narrower (or specific) level. The generic term is useful for the librarian who wishes to classify and catalog materials. It is generally acknowledged that classification schemes should be used to provide an "early warning"

to users. For example, if a client wants a material which has the attribute of motion, he might ask for a film or a motion picture. However, a reel-to-reel videotape, a videocassette or a videodisc might be acceptable. What term should be used to include all moving images? Likewise, is there a single term which would incorporate all projected and non-projected visual images -art print, chart, photograph, slide, filmstrip, transparency, etc.?

At the specific level, the concern shifts to sizes, speed, and combinations of formats. It is possible, for example, to identify a sound recording in a collection but, is that sound recording acceptable for the client's equipment? If the sound recording is disc, is it 45 rpm or 33 1/3 rpm? Is it monophonic or stereophonic? If it is on tape, is it in reel-to-reel, cassette or cartridge format? Is it monophonic or stereophonic? Is it 2 track, 4 track or 8 track? Is the speed 1 7/8, 3 3/4, 7½ or 15 ips? If someone wanted to locate still projected images with sound, there are a variety of options: filmstrip with audiorecord (in all formats); slides with audiorecord (in all formats) and slides encased in an audiorecord.

Any attempt to develop a list of terms and definitions which are internationally acceptable should begin with those which are neither generic nor specific but descriptive of media in common usage. The definitions should not be overly general or highly technical but should characterize each medium sufficiently to distinguish if from other media and to exhibit its

salient features.[5] If these definitions of about twenty terms can be accepted, then special user groups can move in the direction of more generic and more specific. If catalogers need generic terms, let them propose and eventually adopt standard generic terms. If producers and manufacturers need more technical specificity, let them propose and eventually adopt standard technical descriptions for each medium. The acceptance of generic audiovisual terms and definitions would be first step toward international standardization.

The Scope of Audiovisual Terminology

There are hundreds of other terms which have to do with the equipment related to the production and reproduction of the media and terms related to the theory and use of the media.[6]

The terms proposed in this paper are for the media, not the equipment which is required to display the materials. In this sense the term media is defined as "...the graphic, photographic or electronic means for arresting, processing, and reconstituting visual or verbal information."[7]

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5 C.P. Ravilious, "ISBD (NBM) Working Group: Discussion Paper No. 1 (Addenda)" Unpublished manuscript.

6 The bibliography contains references to these glossaries.

7 Adapted from J.V. Edling and C.I. Paulson, "Understanding Instructional Media" in Contributions of Behavioral Science to Instructional Technology: The Cognitive Domain. Washington, D.C.: Gryphon House, 1972. p. 164.

The initial effort for developing internationally acceptable terminology is limited to nonprint media which carry information. The terms being proposed are:

Chart
Diorama
Filmstrip
Flashcard
Flipchart
Game
Kit
Map
Model
Motion picture
Picture
Slide
Sound disc
Sound tape
Sterograph
Transparency
Videodisc
Videotape

Current Efforts to Develop Standard Audiovisual Terminology

While there are many glossaries of audiovisual terms, the only ones considered in this discussion are those which are national or international in scope. This criterion is necessary because individual efforts to develop acceptable definitions offer less potential for acceptance than those which involve many people who are seeking broad acceptance of definitions. If a national or international organization is committed to the task of developing an accepted list of terms and definitions, the liklihood of approval and eventual use is enhanced.

At the international level the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) through its Working Group on the International Standard Bibliographic Description for nonbook materials [ISBD(NBD)] and its Committee on Statistics and Standardization has moved further ahead than any other organization in attempting to select and define audiovisual terms for cataloging and statistics. These two IFLA groups are now working

cooperatively and the leadership of ISO in calling this meeting will serve to expedite the development and further consideration of the proposed terms and definitions.

Up until this time efforts to develop international terminology for the users defined at the beginning of this paper has been in the area of library and documention with emphasis on printed media. INFOTERM, established in 1971 and sponsored by UNESCO within the framework of the UNISIST program, has not turned its attention to audiovisual terminology. The liaison between INFOTERM and Technical Committee 37 of ISO should help to provide a vehicle for dissemination of the outcomes of this meeting and eventual acceptance of audiovisual terms and definitions.

In the United States, the National Center for Education Statistics of the U.S. Office of Education contracted with the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (the national professional organization for educational technology) to develop "A Handbook of Standard Terminology and a Guide for Recording and Reporting Information About Educational Technology." This handbook, which is now in press, includes audiovisual terms and definitions as well as extensive supporting information about the field of educational technology. Also included are useful sections on units of measure, a taxonomic classification scheme, and an extensive list of definitions which encompass the broad field of educational technology. This publication is primarily intended for recording and reporting information about educational technology including audiovisual terms and definitions.

In 1963 the Association for Educational Communications and Technology in the United States published The Changing Role of the Audiovisual Process in Education: A Definition and a Glossary of Related Terms. Since that time it has been the only authoritative source of audiovisual terms and definitions published in English, although specialized glossaries have been published in such related fields as photography, communications and computing.

In the Federal Republic of Germany the Internationales Zentralinstitut für das Jugendund Bildungsfernschen has published a Glossary on Educational Technology (in English and in German.) It was financed by the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Wissenschaft of the Federal Republic of Germany and has been promoted by the Council of Europe. The 700 terms included in the Glossary are intended for teachers, educational researchers and administrators who are likely to need help in understanding the language of educational technology.

The authors of Non-Book Materials: The Organization of Integrated Collections, published by the Canadian Library Association, include a glossary of terms intended for librarians who are cataloging and classifying audiovisual media.

The International Council on Educational Media (ICEM) has published a report on terminology concerned with educational films and other media in several languages and currently has a working group studying systems of media classification.

There may be other national and international efforts to develop audiovisual terms and definitions, but the author has not discovered them through his research or contacts with people who are concerned with this area.

In summary, most of the individuals who are immediately concerned about the development and international acceptance of audiovisual terminology are gathered together for this meeting. It offers an unparalleled opportunity to move this work ahead.

Criteria for Terms and Definitions

If there is no disagreement as to the need for an internationally acceptable list of audiovisual terms and definitions and if there is agreement that no such list currently exists let us proceed with the process. We have the terms and definitions from the two IFLA groups which actually have been combined by C.P. Ravilious.[9]

A useful first step would be to discuss the criteria for selection of terms and their definitions.

1.0 Terms

1.1 Should be descriptive of the media formats in current usage.

1.2 Should be mutually exclusive.

1.3 Should be amenable to translation into the languages used by the United Nations without loss of conceptual meaning.

1.4 Separate terms would not be needed for varying sizes, speeds and packaging of the same medium.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Must be consistent with current practice.

2.2 Must be understandable by all potential users.

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9 C.P. Ravilious, ISBD(NBM) Working Group, Discussion Paper No. 1 (Addenda)

2.3 Must be comprehensive in description leaving no room for ambiguity.

2.4 Must be amenable to translation into the languages used by the United Nations without loss of conceptual meaning.

This is a first step. Next, the process for development and adoption of terms and definitions must be considered.

The Process for Gaining International Acceptance

International agreements are often arrived at after long periods of time because all nations need to have the opportunity to respond to proposals which may seriously affect their future. If a draft of a proposal could be developed and approved at this meeting, we would have a good start on the process.

Ultimately, it would be important to have UNESCO's backing for the terms and definitions. With the leadership of IFLA and ISO and their constituent members and the input of the International Council on Educational Media, most of the major international bodies would have an opportunity to contribute to the final approved version.

Conclusions

There is, at present, no internationally approved list of audiovisual terms and definitions. There is a need for such a glossary to serve (1) producers and manufacturers of audiovisual media and equipment; (2) librarians; (3) practitioners; and (4) administrators. Standardization

of terms is necessary to permit international discourse among professionals. A first attempt to develop audiovisual terminology should not be generic or overly technical but sufficiently specific to distinguish one medium from another without neglecting relevant features of each medium. There are several current glossaries of audiovisual media developed by national organizations in Canada, the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States. International organizations which are currently involved in developing terminology are IFLA and ICEM. Action should be taken to create a draft proposal which meets agreed upon criteria. This proposal should be reviewed by qualified representatives of all nations who are members of the international organizations which must eventually approve a final list of terms and definitions. It is within the scope of this conference to take the first steps toward international adoption.

Specialized Glossaries Related to Instructional Technology

There are many glossaries published which impinge on the field of instructional technology but, because of their highly specialized nature, do not warrant wholesale adoption into a glossary of terms for instructional technology.

These glossaries are useful as resources to check specific terms which are being considered for use in an instructional technology glossary. For the most part, these glossaries are highly technical and therefore are intended for specialists.

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